

11 June 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: The Egyptian-Israeli Situation*

1. Several US and UN military observers believe that Israel is likely to launch an attack to drive Egyptian forces and Arab refugees out of the Gaza strip. In the present tense situation, the possibility of such reckless action goes without saying. Some incursions and shootings by refugees and hot-headed Egyptian troops will almost certainly continue, thus encouraging the Israelis in their policy of reprisals. The fact that "activist" sentiment for a military showdown with the Arabs is particularly strong in Israeli military circles enhances the likelihood that local clashes might get out of hand. However, we still believe that neither Israel nor Egypt is prepared to take the political and military risks involved in deliberately initiating full-scale hostilities.

2. Premier Nasser almost certainly recognizes that Egypt would probably suffer severe military reverses and his own position seriously threatened in event of war with Israel. As for Israel, we continue to believe that it would be reluctant to risk the possibility of Tripartite intervention and the loss of US financial support which deliberate Israeli aggression would probably involve. Moreover, it would appear unlikely that the Israeli Government, whose present toughness is at least partially motivated by a desire to win support in the 26 July general elections, would wish to confront the electorate with a full-scale war, and resulting international complications. *would be*

3. We believe that the chances are better than even that the present crisis may be eased, at least until after the Israeli election, under strong pressure from General Burns and the Tripartite Declaration signatories, the US, the UK, and France. Both Israel and Egypt have tentatively accepted the idea of talks between ranking military representatives to work out better border controls though they are still far from agreement on the precise level of representation. Even if such talks are held, however, the Gaza situation will remain explosive.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

DOCUMENT NO. 3
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
☒ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTH: HR 79-2
DATE: 1-5-80 REVIEWER: 372044

SHERMAN KENT
Assistant Director
National Estimates

* This memorandum has been coordinated with OCI and OD/P and was informally discussed at the IAC meeting on 14 June.